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665 been demoted . . . Sovnarkom President Goloded had become temporarily unassailable, and in Moscow he was above any sort of suspicion. As for Gikalo, to be changed from party director of a republic to second secretary of an oblast', even one with heavy industry, was considered a step down.

After an absence of more than a year in Kazakhstan, V. Sharangovich was sent by the Kremlin as first secretary of the Central Committee of the Party in Belorussia. It looked as if the Belorussian Communists had attained their heart's desire -- as first secretary they got a Belorussian who for the third time was returning to work in Belorussia. The ensuing year brought with it many griveous changes.

Yezhovshchina - 1937

643 /this spelling occurs in the original, otherwise the transliteration used is "Ezhovshchina." Translator/

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In the middle of 1937, the president of the Supreme Soviets of the B. S. S. R. and the U. S. S. R., Aleksandr Grigor'evich Chervikov, committed suicide. A Belorussian by nationality and born in the village of Dukorka thirty-five kilometers from Minsk, he was a teacher by specialty, having graduated from the normal school in Wilno. In the First World War Chervikov was an officer. The February Revolution found him in Petrograd where he subsequently organized the Belorussian soldiers of the Petrograd garrison. After the Bolshevik seizure of power Chervikov entered the Communist Party. When on February 27, 1919, the so-called Lithuanian-Belorussian Soviet Republic was organized on the territory of Lithuania and Belorussia, Chervikov became Deputy Commissar of Public Education (1). From the day of /55/ the second announce-

1. Immediately before this Chervikov was Commissar of Public Education in the first government of the B. S. S. R. (cf. Bol'shaia Sovetskaia Entsiklopedia /Large Soviet Encyclopedia/, 1934 Edition, Vol. LXI, page 195/ (sic).

ment of the Belorussian S. S. R. up to his death Chervikov was the irreplaceable president of the Central Executive Committee and then of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. . He was not noted for his revolutionary activities. It is possible that in the

643 first years after the revolution Cherviakov was attracted by the
660 idea of a national rebirth in Belorussia, and, like many other
Belorussian intellectual, he hoped for a regeneration of the
Soviet system and the creation of a Belorussian democratic republic.
It was rumored that Cherviakov, during the Belorussian national
movement of the NEP years, belonged to an underground organization
of Belorussian nationalists (1). He understood the psychology of

1. These rumors, more probably, were disseminated by
the G. P. U. and are scarcely consonant with reality.

the national masses perfectly, especially that of the peasantry,
and was a good speaker. In the first years of the Soviet regime,
when possibilities were more numerous, Cherviakov did a lot of
work. Of course he could not proclaim his own Belorussian laws,
but anyone who was offended, hampered by his limited rights,
or sentenced to a long term in prison or even death, found a
possible source of assistance in the person of Cherviakov, that is,
if assistance was still possible in any way at all. The peasantry,
in particular, came streaming into his anteroom. His popularity
was extraordinary. His official position permitted him frequent
trips to the cities, towns, and villages of Belorussia. Not follow-
ing the example of other Soviet leaders, he always tried to be with
the masses, to see everything with his own eyes, to talk with the
peasantry and the workers. Already as early as the thirties, every
Soviet person, eminent ones in particular, had to be especially
restrained, circumspect, and careful, not only in his actions, but
in words, meetings with others, and conversations. As far back
as the time of NEP, Cherviakov, while speaking at a meeting on
a visit to Moscow, had been careless enough to repeat Bukharin's
slogan, "Get Rich!" Subsequently this carelessness caused Cherviakov
a lot of difficulties. Every climber and careerist, during the col-
lectivization and afterwards, took every opportunity, whether or
not it had any relation to the business at hand, to remind Chervia-
kov of this "cardinal sin." Bukharin was accused by using this
slogan, of inciting to individual rather than to the collective
prosperity which was to be realized through the kolkhoz and
nationalized state industry. Cherviakov's enemies were always
trying to pin a right deviation on him. However, /56/ none of
the attempts to overthrow Cherviakov, especially those made by

643 Secretary Gikalo, met with success. The Kremlin directed that
661 he should remain as President of the Supreme Soviet of the
B. S. S. R. In his personal life he was very unassuming and not
fond of any sort of pomp and circumstance. During a Party plenum
in the conference room of the government building Cherviakov
left the meeting, went into his office, locked the door, and shot
himself in the heart - with a revolver. When the door was forced
open he was already dead. On the day after his suicide this little
notice in small type appeared on the last pages of the Minsk news-
papers: "Yesterday, due to family misunderstandings, A. Cherviakov,
the President of the Supreme Soviets of the B. S. S. R. and the
U. S. S. R., shot himself." His corpse was displayed in the club
of the labor union of soviet and commercial employees. On the
day of the funeral a simple, rough, wooden, not even painted
coffin was set on the platform of a truck, without any wreaths
or the funeral ribbons with inscriptions which are usual in such
cases and born off to the tomb without any funeral music. None-
theless Cherviakov's funeral turned into a large, crowded, but
silent demonstration of the population of Minsk. An enormous
crowd accompanied the coffin; policemen on foot and horseback
drove away the multitudes of people and ordered them to disperse,
saying, "Well, you've seen the funeral, now move on." During
the funeral procession, because of the massive gatherings of
people, every sort of movement through the streets came to a
halt. During the funeral itself there were no speeches or memorials.
He was buried but not forgotten. For more than a year Cherviakov's
tomb was always decorated with newly-cut flowers which his friends
and well-wishers brought. His wife and two foster-daughters
left Minsk after the funeral and were arrested later on. After his
death Cherviakov left the most happy memories among Belorussians.

Osip Stakun was appointed president of the Supreme Soviet
of the B. S. S. R. in his place. He appeared in Belorussia in about
1934 or 1935. We have no information where and in what capacity
he had previously worked. It is known that Stakun had long been
a member of the Communist Party, which he had joined even
before the February Revolution, while a foreman in the Putilov
Works in Leningrad. By his habits and bearing Stakun reminded one
of the old Party intellectual-idealists, who payed little attention
to their personal lives. He was pleasant with others and displayed
no sharpness on the job. Coming from the Wilno province and

643 Belorussian by nationality he showed no interest in the Belorussian national work, even though at the time it was very muffled and suppressed. Upon his appointment as president of the Supreme Soviet the general opinion was /57/ that he would, to some extent, take the place of the intelligent and sensitive Cherviakov. However Stakun lasted no longer than three or four months as president, after which he was arrested. His fate is unknown. Then a certain Natalevich was appointed president. No one at all knew him; there were rumors that he had been a captain in the Red Army, but he certainly was never a member of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. . Nothing was known of his past. He lasted until the war, and apparently even during the war was still considered president since he remained at the post afterwards. What has happened to him recently is matter for conjecture since now there is another president of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R.

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641 After Cherviakov's suicide the next prominent victim of the Ezhovshchina was the president of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R. , Nikolai Goloded. He was not arrested when the secretary of the Party Central Committee announced to him that he was being recalled from his post. In his place another secretary was recommended, a certain Volkovich. Goloded was arrested either in Moscow or along the way. It became known subsequently that during the examination by the N. K. V. D. he threw himself from the fifth floor and killed himself. There are grounds for supposing that the N. K. V. D. purposely made his death look like suicide. We have already spoken about his career several times (cf. pages 43, 45, 51). He was president of the Sovnarkom of the B. S. S. R. for almost ten years, taking the place of Adamovich who was recalled from Belorussia and shot himself during the Ezhovshchina. Goloded had an excellent memory as well as great ability as a director and administrator. He had barely finished the first three classes of the workers' school of the Agricultural Academy. However his natural abilities made it possible for him to cope with his responsible Soviet post. On the job he was secretive and conceited, and was able to bring others under his influence. He was not on familiar terms with anyone, and was always reserved. In Moscow he was able and skillful at promoting the cause of the Belorussian economy. He was on good terms with Molotov, Mikoian, Voroshilov, and Ordzhonikidze. However, all this did not save him from death.

661 his throat with a razor but was saved from dying. Possibly it was just this which saved him from arrest. Others who were not arrested were Z. Biadulia and the budding writers, Brovko and Glebko. /67/

After the Ezhovshchina

625 After the Ezhovshchina accounts were settled with those
661 whose function it had been to execute the will of the organizers of the terror. However, this took place within the walls of the N. D. V. D. In Vitebsk a certain Grechkin who had been arrested and subsequently set free was summoned to the (N. K. V. D.) court to serve as a witness in a case involving the inadmissibility of torture during examination. The investigator had knocked out several of Grechkin's teeth and was found guilty, but Grechkin was compelled to sign a statement that he would not divulge any information about what had transpired. The document, I Accuse the Kremlin of the Genocide of My Nation, by Nikolai Abramchik, published in 1950 in Toronto, Canada, in English, will provide sufficient testimony to the deeds of the N. K. V. D. in Belorussia during the Ezhovshchina.

665 The secretary of the Communist Party Central Committee,
661 Volkov, was recalled from Belorussia after the Ezhovshchina and sent off to work in 'Mordovskaia oblast'. What became of him subsequently is not known, but the Belorussians will not forget this black figure who himself played such a very vital part in the slaughter of tens of thousands of people. His cruelty was exceptional. P. Ponomarenko, who formerly had been a political agent in the Red Army in the Far East, was appointed first secretary. A new direction could be sensed in the Party's work, and this was particularly noticeable where the national movement was concerned. Formerly, national characteristics had been taken into account in various elections, appointments, and recruitments, but after the arrival of Ponomarenko the national problem ceased to exist official-

661y. The whole group of the former leaders had been destroyed.¹

643 Natalievich -- a man little known to the Belorussian masses, lacking in authority and initiative, and obedient to the will of the secretary of the Central Committee -- settled down into the presidency of the Supreme Soviet of the B. S. S. R. To the post of Secretary of the Supreme Soviet -- who in fact was the deputy president -- a completely unknown worker from around Mogilev

661 was appointed. A young doctor named Kiselev, who was totally

1 [During the 1936-1937 political purge - analyst]

[Constitution as of July, 1947]

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642 the Belorussian SSR;

- w) Establishment of the representation of the Belorussian SSR in international relations;
- x) Organisation of the military formations of the Belorussian SSR;
- y) Legislation concerning marriage and the family.

Chapter III. The Higher Organs of State Power in the
Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic

646 Art. 20. The highest organ of state power in the Belorussian SSR is the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 21. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR is elected for a term of four years by the citizens of the Belorussian SSR voting by election districts on the basis of one deputy for every 20,000 of the population.

Art. 22. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR exercises all rights vested in the Belorussian SSR in accordance with Article 13 and 19 of the Constitution of the Belorussian SSR, insofar as they do not, by virtue of the Constitution, come within the jurisdiction of organs of the Belorussian SSR that are accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, that is, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, the Council of Ministers of the Belorussian SSR, and the Ministries of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 23. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR is the sole legislative organ of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 24. A law is considered adopted if passed by the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR by a simple majority vote.

Art. 25. Laws passed by the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR are published in the Belorussian and Russian languages over the signatures of the President and Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 26. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR elects a Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and four Vice-Chairmen.

Art. 27. The Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR presides at the sittings of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR and has charge of the conduct of its business and proceedings.

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646 Art. 28. Sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR are convened by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR twice a year.

Extraordinary sessions are convened by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR at its discretion or on the demand of one-third of the deputies to the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 29. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR elects the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, consisting of a President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, two Vice-Presidents, a Secretary of the Presidium and fifteen members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 30. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR is accountable to the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR for all its activities.

[Constitution as of July, 1947]

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643 Art. 31. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR;
a) Convenes the sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR;

b) Gives interpretation of laws; issues decrees;

c) Gives interpretations of the laws of the Belorussian SSR in operation;

d) Conducts nation-wide polls (referendums);

[645] e) Annuls decisions and orders of the Council of Ministers of the Belorussian SSR and likewise decisions and orders of the regional Soviets of Working People's Deputies if they do not conform to law;

f) In the intervals between sessions of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, releases and appoints Ministers of the Belorussian SSR, on the recommendation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Belorussian SSR, subject to subsequent confirmation by the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR;

g) Grants the rights of citizenship of the Belorussian SSR;

h) Confers titles of honour of the Belorussian SSR and grants

awards;

i) Exercises the right of pardoning citizens convicted by judicial organs of the Belorussian SSR;

j) Appoints and recalls diplomatic representatives of the Belorussian SSR to foreign states;

k) Receives the letters of credence and recall of diplomatic representatives accredited to it by foreign states.

646 Art. 32. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR elects a Credentials Committee to verify the credentials of the members of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

On the report of the Credentials Committee, the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR decides whether to recognize the credentials of deputies or to annul their election.

Art. 33. The Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, when it deems necessary, appoints commissions of investigation and audit on any matter.

It is the duty of all institutions and officials to comply with the demands of such commissions and to submit to them all necessary materials and documents.

Art. 34. A member of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR may not be prosecuted or arrested without the consent of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, or, when the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR is not in session, without the consent of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

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646 Art. 35. On the expiration of the term of office of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR orders new elections to be held within a period not exceeding two months from the date of expiration of the term of office of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 36. On the expiration of the term of office of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR retains its powers until the newly-elected Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR shall have formed a new Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR.

Art. 37. The newly-elected Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR is convened by the outgoing Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR not later than three months after the elections.